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LETTER DATED 12 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a statement on the situation in
Somalia, made by Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, to the Council of Ministers of the Organization
of African Unity at its sixty-eighth session, held at Ouagadougou from 8 to
10 June 1998.

I should be grateful if you would kindly have the present letter and its
annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex

Statement on the situation in Somalia, made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia to the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its sixty-eighth session, held at Ouagadougou from 8 to 10 June 1998

I would like to thank you for giving me the floor to address the situation in Somalia, which continues to be a major source of concern to our subregion, the Horn of Africa and the continent as a whole.

We have read the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia. We believe that the report describes the prevailing situation accurately and fairly. We are also of the opinion that the recommendations suggested in the report will contribute to our future work in favour of promoting peace and national reconciliation in Somalia.

You will recall that at its sixty-seventh session, held at Addis Ababa in February, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) reviewed the developments in Somalia and encouraged the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Ethiopia, the mandated country. I would like to inform you of developments regarding Somalia over the past four months.

Following the sixty-seventh session of the Council of Ministers, the IGAD Heads of State held their sixth summit meeting in Djibouti on 16 March. Our leaders met at a time when it had become very clear that earlier attempts to bring the Somalis together had failed. After analysing the situation in the country, it was resolved to approach the crisis in a different way.

We in the subregion have realized that faction leaders have not proved to be ready to do what it takes in order to reach agreement in Somalia. We had been earlier working from the premise that an agreement between faction leaders would translate into an accord on national reconciliation. However, in view of the incapacity of faction leaders to make the necessary accommodations, it has now become important to widen our view and broaden the peace process to enable greater participation by Somali civil society.

By Somali civil society we are referring to representatives of religious leaders, clan elders, intellectuals, Somali businessmen, women's groups and others. These are for the most part constituencies of peace in Somalia, and there is a need to identify and contact them and bring them within the orbit of the peace process. Broadening the peace process has the double advantage that it serves the purposes of inclusion, while prodding the faction leaders into coming to terms with one another.

We also agreed in Djibouti on the need for the international community to contribute politically, diplomatically and financially, specifically by assisting the rehabilitation of those regions where faction leaders and their constituencies demonstrate a practical commitment to peace, stability and national reconciliation. We believe that this approach would reward those

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embarked on peaceful reconstruction and encourage others to follow suit. In this regard, we called for the activation of the Trust Fund for Somalia at the United Nations and requested the European Union to find ways and means of utilizing monies for this purpose from funds earmarked for Somalia in the Lomé context.

Our leaders also called for looking into the possibilities for creating a mechanism of consultation with all those who are prepared to contribute to the peace process in Somalia on the basis of the IGAD initiative and on conditions that they refrain from engaging in parallel initiatives.

I am certain that you realize very well that the proliferation of initiatives on Somalia was providing one faction leader or another with the possibility to withstand pressure for accommodation and thereby torpedo peace efforts. This is why it was essential that all countries with an interest in supporting the IGAD initiative were provided with the possibility to channel their energies in a supportive and constructive way.

Finally our leaders expressed the will to call an international conference under the auspices of IGAD to maximize the support of the international community for the peace process. The aim of the conference is to include all those who have a stake in peace in Somalia. Therefore, faction leaders, civil groups such as clan elders, representatives of women and youth groups, Somali intellectuals, religious leaders and the business community would need to participate in the conference. As an international forum, the conference is intended to include the international community, namely, countries and organizations that have a role to play in the Somali peace process.

The rationale for holding such a conference should not be difficult to explain. Firstly, it will bring together all the Somali actors. It will demonstrate to faction leaders that there are other actors in the country who are recognized by the international community as an important constituency in today's Somalia. It will also encourage Somali civil society to be more effective, thereby speeding up the normalization of the situation in the country.

With all local actors in the picture there can be no excuse for not participating in the conference. We say this in particular because there will be no exclusivity externally either. All countries and organizations with a role to play will be part of the international conference. So, if it is prepared with the necessary care, as we are confident it will be, it will be possible to have an event that will include everyone, avoiding the pitfalls of any form of exclusivity. And we are hopeful that the conference will come out with an action plan that will facilitate the calibrated use of assistance to Somalia in a way that might push the national reconciliation process forward.

What I have described to you is how we in IGAD saw the way forward on Somalia when we met in Djibouti almost four months ago. We have, since then, been following the evolving situation in Somalia quite closely and working out the next steps in the peace process.

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The situation in Somalia continues to be very fluid. In the north-west (Somaliland), there is relative stability, although the worsening economic situation could increase tension and trigger strife. In the north-east, which is also relatively stable, efforts are under way to establish an administration for the Mejertin area described as Puntland. Elsewhere in the south, there are sporadic conflict situations, as alignments shift here and there and where competition for territory and influence is fierce, such as in Kisimayo.

In and around the capital, Mogadishu, despite agreements with the objective of establishing an authority for the area, the jockeying for power has not played itself out yet, and the influence of that problem is felt further inland in the Baidoa area, where former commitments to pull out militia have not been met.

We are wondering where all this might lead, whether this is the actual administrative and political breakup of the country or whether we are witnessing the birth of the building blocks of a new federal Somalia along lines not foreseen in former agreements. We hope that all the constituent parts and units of Somalia will recognize the benefits of moving towards unity, and we will do our best to nudge them in that direction.

Over the past few months, we have witnessed the growing interest of the international community to support the peace process in Somalia. The partners of IGAD grouped in the IGAD Partners Forum formed a Committee on Somalia and met in Rome on 4 May to see how they could best be of assistance. They were joined by Egypt, while the Russian Federation and Greece participated as observers. IGAD was represented by the mandated country, Ethiopia, and the Secretary-General of IGAD.

At the meeting, it was clear that there was general support for the new approach adopted by our subregion to the Somali crisis. There was general agreement that the international community would need to back the regional initiative and to speak with one voice to the Somalis. We have recently learned that our partners have established a liaison group made up of countries and organizations with a strong interest in the outcome in Somalia and that they will be interacting with us as we implement the Djibouti decision.

We in the subregion have always been very much encouraged by the full support of OAU as we work to fulfil the heavy responsibility with which you have entrusted us.

We believe strongly that the Security Council should once again evaluate the situation and pronounce itself on Somalia. We would suggest that the Council:

- Call upon all Somali leaders to rise to the challenge and make the necessary compromises for peace and national reconciliation to take root;
- Endorse the decisions arrived at by IGAD Heads of State and Government at their sixth summit, held in Djibouti on 16 March 1998;
- Call upon OAU member States and the international community to support politically, diplomatically and in other practical ways the regional peace initiative.